

# Vermont Agency of Human Services

## *Actions, Hurrahs, and Successes*

[www.ahs.state.vt.us](http://www.ahs.state.vt.us)

Waterbury, Vermont 05671

July 2005

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### **Message from the Secretary**

It has been a year since we began 'moving the AHS boxes' around for the first wave of changes associated with the Agency's reorganization, and a lot has happened in that time. Thanks to all our staff and our community partners for their combined efforts - we truly are on our way to becoming a new Agency. Acknowledging that completing a reorganization can take anywhere from 3-5 years, we feel it's time for an update on how we are doing as restructured - in short, how the "transformation" of the Agency is going.

*~ Michael K. Smith, Secretary*

FYI: You can find this Update on our website at: [www.ahs.state.vt.us](http://www.ahs.state.vt.us)

### **DCF On-Line Food Stamp Course Going National**

The Department for Children and Families is sharing their on-line food stamp training course with the entire United States! The federal Food and Nutrition Services (FNS) plans to replicate DCF's Food Stamp Computer-Assisted Training (CAT) on the FNS national website. The project that created the DCF e-Learning center and the Food Stamp CAT was an integral part of the Agency's reinvestment plan to improve food stamp services to recipients. CAT provides eligibility workers with complete and up-to-date training materials right at their own work stations. For more information about the Food Stamp program or the CAT contact Food and Nutrition Program Chief Renée Richardson via email at: [reneeer@path.state.vt.us](mailto:reneeer@path.state.vt.us).

### **DCF Leadership Change**

AHS Secretary Michael K. Smith announced that Commissioner James Morse will retire from his position on September 30, 2005. Jim will be succeeded by Steve Dale as Commissioner of the Department for Children and Families. Steve holds a master's degree in Education from Allegheny College and is a Certified Public Manager in Vermont. During his 30-year career in human services, Steve has been a manager in the Department of Corrections and the Department of SRS, was Director of the Baird Center for Children and Families, and for the past 11 months, has provided leadership for the reorganization of human services in the role of Deputy Commissioner of Field Services for AHS. We wish Jim all the best in his retirement, and welcome Steve to this new role. Steve can be reached at: [steve.dale@dcf.state.vt.us](mailto:steve.dale@dcf.state.vt.us).

## **NEW!! Information and Referral Tools**

**The Screen Door:** Consumers and service providers asked for better access to AHS services and help in finding their way through its many programs. One AHS response is the creation of an online referral tool, the Screen Door.

The Screen Door provides an overview of a wide range of Vermont health and human services programs, basic guidelines for eligibility, and important local contact information. Once users enter a little bit of information about their family, they'll be provided with a list of the services they might be eligible for, and contact information so they can quickly find out more.

With the Screen Door on the internet, people can use it in the privacy of their own homes or anywhere there is internet access, such as the local libraries or DET offices. [www.screendoor.vermont.gov](http://www.screendoor.vermont.gov). Give it a try!

**Vermont 211:** This is the United Ways of Vermont's online and telephone health and human services information and referral program. People can call 2-1-1 to ask about services or visit the web site for information on programs and resources specific to their own communities, as well as find links to Federal assistance programs. You can find a link to 211 on the Screen Door web site, or visit it directly at [www.Vermont211.org](http://www.Vermont211.org) for more details. AHS is proud to partner with and support the United Way on this effort.

## ***How Do I Find Help? Click on the AHS Website!***

Speaking of on-line information, an easy-to-use tool located on the AHS website takes the guesswork out of locating services in the reorganized Agency. Visit the AHS web site at [www.ahs.state.vt.us](http://www.ahs.state.vt.us) and click on the link ***How Do I Find Help?*** There is also an ***Emergency*** link for eleven services provided by the Agency and our community partners.

## **Staff Satisfaction Survey**

One of the clear objectives of the reorganization efforts is to attend to the organizational climate and human resource needs of Agency staff. Approximately half of the 3,300 staff members responded to the recent confidential survey. Information was sought in four areas: supervision and leadership; work environment; resources for job success; and the work of AHS. Results will be published in the fall of 2005. For more information contact Susan Besio, AHS Planning Director, at: [susanb@ahs.state.vt.us](mailto:susanb@ahs.state.vt.us). Susan hopes to get some "raw data" results out this summer.

## Field Services

Under the leadership of Steve Dale, the Field Directors have been working on a variety of projects that cross departmental lines - just as re-org intended. Field Directors have been actively involved in identifying and resolving issues in their communities and bringing key policy issues to the New Agency Team. Further, they have been conducting office environment assessments, designing modest improvements where needed, and developing or breathing new life into a variety of advisory groups within the communities. Joe Patrissi ([joe.patrisi@dcf.state.vt.us](mailto:joe.patrisi@dcf.state.vt.us)) and Monica Hutt ([monica.hutt@dcf.state.vt.us](mailto:monica.hutt@dcf.state.vt.us)) work closely with Steve, providing guidance and direction to the Field Directors. For general information on the Field Director division, please contact:

Deputy Commissioner      Steve Dale      [steve.dale@dcf.state.vt.us](mailto:steve.dale@dcf.state.vt.us)

For issues in a specific geographic area, contact the Field Directors directly:

Barre	Don Mandelkorn	<a href="mailto:don.mandelkorn@dcf.state.vt.us">don.mandelkorn@dcf.state.vt.us</a>
Bennington	Charlie Gingo	<a href="mailto:charlie.gingo@dcf.state.vt.us">charlie.gingo@dcf.state.vt.us</a>
Brattleboro	John Swartz	<a href="mailto:john.swartz@dcf.state.vt.us">john.swartz@dcf.state.vt.us</a>
Burlington	Jane Helmstetter	<a href="mailto:jane.helmstetter@dcf.state.vt.us">jane.helmstetter@dcf.state.vt.us</a>
Hartford	Sara Kobylenski	<a href="mailto:sara.kobylenski@dcf.state.vt.us">sara.kobylenski@dcf.state.vt.us</a>
Middlebury	Sue Schmidt	<a href="mailto:sue.schmidt@dcf.state.vt.us">sue.schmidt@dcf.state.vt.us</a>
Morrisville	Scott Johnson	<a href="mailto:scott.johnson@dcf.state.vt.us">scott.johnson@dcf.state.vt.us</a>
Newport	Bonnie Nash	<a href="mailto:bonnie.nash@dcf.state.vt.us">bonnie.nash@dcf.state.vt.us</a>
Rutland	Richard Giddings	<a href="mailto:richard.giddings@dcf.state.vt.us">richard.giddings@dcf.state.vt.us</a>
St. Albans	Pam McCarthy	<a href="mailto:pam.mccarthy@dcf.state.vt.us">pam.mccarthy@dcf.state.vt.us</a>
St. Johnsbury	Greg MacDonald	<a href="mailto:gregory.macdonald@dcf.state.vt.us">gregory.macdonald@dcf.state.vt.us</a>
Springfield	Lynn Boyle	<a href="mailto:lynn.boyle@dcf.state.vt.us">lynn.boyle@dcf.state.vt.us</a>

## Customer Satisfaction Survey - in progress

The Agency is pursuing continuous improvement and accountability of our customer service. To determine current satisfaction levels, approximately 2,500 individuals who have received AHS services were randomly selected and invited to participate in a customer satisfaction telephone survey. Possible survey participants received a letter and were given the opportunity to decline to participate. The survey, being conducted through UVM, is currently in progress.

An **AHS Customer Satisfaction Team** - of staff and those who receive AHS services - will advise us on the content, processes, and findings related to the above survey, and will identify other potential strategies for assessing satisfaction, including working on Customer Comment Cards to be broadly distributed this fall. For more information contact Susan Besio, AHS Planning Director, at: [susanb@ahs.state.vt.us](mailto:susanb@ahs.state.vt.us).

## Autism Specialist Hired

Consistent with the reorganization plan and the AHS strategic plan, the Department of Disabilities, Aging and Independent Living (DAIL) has hired an Autism Specialist. Clare McFadden started in this role on May 30th and will spend much of her first year identifying needs and resources. Clare can be reached via email at: [clare.mcfadden@dail.state.vt.us](mailto:clare.mcfadden@dail.state.vt.us).

## Trauma News

**Position Recruitment:** Another position consistent with the reorganization and AHS strategic plans is a Trauma Specialist. Recruitment is currently underway, and we hope to have the position filled very soon.

**Trauma-Informed Workshop:** The Department of Corrections and the Agency's Human Resource Development Unit are sponsoring a one-day, no-cost workshop for human service professionals to become trauma-informed. It's scheduled for July 29<sup>th</sup> from 8:30 am - 4 pm in Waterbury. To register contact Jennifer Sprafke in the Department of Corrections at: [jsprafke@doc.state.vt.us](mailto:jsprafke@doc.state.vt.us) or 241-3956.

**Policy Cluster:** For information about the impact trauma has on the lives of individuals and families the Agency serves, go the Trauma Policy Cluster on the AHS web site:

[www.ahs.state.vt.us/PolicyClusters/NewTrauma/TraumaPolicyStatement.cfm](http://www.ahs.state.vt.us/PolicyClusters/NewTrauma/TraumaPolicyStatement.cfm).

## Methamphetamine Information Sessions for Community Professionals

Prevention is an important theme of the AHS reorganization. Keeping drugs out of our communities is an essential prevention initiative all Vermonters can pursue.

The Departments of Health (VDH) and Public Safety are presenting Methamphetamine Informational Sessions for community professionals in each of the state's 12 districts. These 2-hour workshops take place at 2:30 pm and again at 6:30 pm. Upcoming July sessions are scheduled for: White River Junction, July 13; and St. Albans, July 27. A complete schedule is posted on the VT Criminal Justice Training Council website <http://www.vcjtc.state.vt.us/meth.htm>.

For more information contact Suzie Wilson, Training Chief in the Department of Health's Division of Alcohol and Drug Abuse Programs: She's reachable at [swilson@vdh.state.vt.us](mailto:swilson@vdh.state.vt.us) or at 802-651-1568.

## Visit Our Web Sites - Learn Stuff

Here is a small sampling of the things you can find on the six websites for the Agency, its departments and the Office of VT Health Access:

- AHS - The Agency of Human Services: [www.ahs.state.vt.us](http://www.ahs.state.vt.us). The 2005 status report on *Social Well Being of Vermonters* gives information on how Vermont compares with other states and nationally, regarding a variety of wellness indicators.
- VHD - The Department of Health: [www.healthyvermonters.info](http://www.healthyvermonters.info). Updates on Vermont infectious diseases and health travel advisories from the national Center for Disease Control (CDC).
- DAIL - The Department of Disabilities, Aging, & Independent Living: [www.dad.state.vt.us](http://www.dad.state.vt.us). Provides information about the new Long-term Care Waiver just approved by the federal government that will provide equal access to home-based and nursing home care.
- DOC - The Department of Corrections: [www.doc.state.vt.us](http://www.doc.state.vt.us). Read the *Comprehensive Mental Health Services Plan* or learn about the work force development program.
- DCF - The Department for Children and Families: [www.dcf.state.vt.us](http://www.dcf.state.vt.us). Find out about the Building Bright Futures initiative, learn where to find donated food, or read about changes in premiums for our health care programs.
- OVHA - The Office of Vermont Health Access: [www.ovha.state.vt.us](http://www.ovha.state.vt.us). Easy to access information for health care and pharmacy programs.

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